

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: *How I Learned French: A Memoir*

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How I Learned French is a braided memoir about a young person assigned female at birth and presenting as a girl who used a media-fostered dream of living in France as a way to survive Ozarkian transience and squalor. The memoir weaves together snapshots of the challenging childhood, adolescence and young adulthood that made escape necessary; narrative illustrations of the popular mediatic representations that suggested France was the answer; and the metamorphosis they—identifying as non-binary/gender fluid—experienced their first year in France. *How I Learned French* explores issues of place, class/socioeconomic status, gender, negotiating identities in a foreign language context, culture shock, motivation, mental illness, sexual trauma, power and agency, and the effect of popular culture on expectation/creation of “reality.” The following excerpt includes the first three chapters entitled “Sabrina,” “Bastrop Street” and “Roadblocks.”